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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004355

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH MILITARY AND OPPOSITION CHP CONTINUE

ANTI-U.S./ANTI-RULING AKP CAMPAIGN OVER IRAQ INCIDENT

(U) Classified by Ambassador W.R. Pearson. Reason:
1.5(b)(d).

1. (U) Action request -- para 10.

2. (C) Summary: While some of the Turkish press continues to fan anti-U.S. and anti-ruling AK party sentiment, other papers are featuring sources which point to charges that Turkish Special Forces were engaged in activities in Iraq inimical to cooperation with the U.S. President Sezer issued an unhelpful statement and opposition CHP, a mouthpiece for military views, continued its emotionally-laden anti-U.S./anti-AK rhetoric in Parliament. In parallel with public statements by P.M. Erdogan and F.M. Gul underscoring the importance of good relations with the U.S., ranking AK party officials have privately continued to emphasize the party and government's commitment to good bilateral relations. At the same time, AK officials appeal for a USG statement recognizing the AK government's responsible stance. Action request: That Washington use the joint commission final statement to reward those who have worked to maintain close relations with the U.S. in the face of a concerted effort to undermine them. End summary.

3. (U) Sensationalist articles about the alleged mistreatment of the Turkish Special Forces (TSF) detainees, NATO-sourced charges against TSF actions in Northern Iraq, and reporting on the first day of discussion in the joint U.S. military-TGS fact-finding commission dominated the Turkish press July 10.

-- Mainstream "Hurriyet" ran a front-page photo of wrist-burns sustained by one detainee when he was handcuffed by U.S. troops. The photo is captioned "We will never forget these marks."

-- Opposite the photo is a separate story that claimed "only the quick-thinking" of the TSF commander averted an armed clash with U.S. forces. One Turkish officer asserted that U.S. troops fired a bullet past his head even after he showed that the Turks had laid down their weapons.

4. (U) Most papers also highlight detailed charges against the TSF unit by "NATO sources," who asserted that Turkey had been warned repeatedly against providing weapons and military training to the Turkmen. The sources claimed that retired TSF officers and "Turkish nationalists" had been brought to

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Northern Iraq to provoke tension between the Turkmen and the Kurds.

-- The NATO sources reportedly said that the July 4 incident began with the raid of a building 25 km from Suleimaniya where members of the unit were training Turkmen in the use of explosives. U.S. forces then surrounded and entered the TSF office in Suleimaniya, where they discovered Turks dressed in civilian clothes and not carrying identification. They also found weapons that were "not in Turkey's inventory."

-- These discoveries, according to the report, prompted U.S. forces to "treat the detainees as terrorists."

5. (U) Most papers describe a "positive atmosphere" in the opening meeting of the joint commission. "Hurriyet" columnist Sedat Ergin, who is close to the TGS, predicted that a joint statement on the commission's findings would likely be released July 11 or 12. Establishment standard-bearer "Cumhuriyet" asserted that the joint statement will focus on "establishing mechanisms to ensure that such incidents are not repeated." All papers report that leader of the U.S. delegation Gen. Sylvester will travel to Northern Iraq to consult with the U.S. commanders who carried out the raid.

-- However, center-left intellectual "Radikal" columnist Murat Yetkin, long a conduit for military views, described the joint talks as "tense," and wrote that it is "unlikely" that the disagreement can be overcome in the short term. Yetkin predicted that although some Turkish military liaisons may continue to work with U.S. forces in Northern Iraq, the vast majority of Turkish units will be forced to withdraw very soon.

-- President Sezer, speaking out on the issue for the first time -- and on the sixth day of a crisis that showed signs of quieting down for the past two days -- termed the U.S. action "inexcusable."

-- Papers report that during the first meeting of the joint fact-finding commission, the Turkish side denied the U.S. allegations.

16. (C) Seeking a meeting with us at the Embassy, Tuncer Bakirhan, Chairman of the pro-Kurdish DEHAP Party (the Sinn Fein of the PKK/KADEK), asserted to us July 10 that "hawks" in the Turkish NSC and military are trying to undermine the AK government's efforts to pass a workable reintegration law that would be attractive enough to bring PKK/KADEK members down from the mountains. Bakirhan asserted that the "hawks" are using the Iraq incident to promote their own interests in keeping the Kurds under pressure.

17. (C) Kemal Koprulu, head of the Ari Movement, a leading centrist NGO well-connected with the Establishment, told the Ambassador July 10 that hard-line elements of the military, aided by President Sezer and other establishment/Turkish State elements, are fanning the flames in the media to put the pressure on AK as part of an effort to bring it down. Koprulu suggested that this effort appears more sophisticated than the military's 1997 "post-modern" coup d'etat against the then Islamist-led government.

18. (C) Parliamentary NATO committee chairman Vahit Erdem, who joined AK after a 36-year career in the most elite parts of the Turkish State bureaucracy, told us July 10 that, given P.M. Erdogan's inexperience, he (Erdem) was pleasantly surprised at how well Erdogan has maintained a responsible posture during this latest crisis and in the face of open provocations from the military, press, and opposition CHP. Turkey needs the U.S. and the U.S. can take advantage of Turkey's regional experience, and maintenance of close relations is thus crucial, Erdem added.

19. (C) AK party vice chairman for foreign policy Saban Disli alerted us July 10 to FonMin Gul's public reiteration to the National Economic Council of the importance of good relations with the U.S. and the need to await the results of the joint commission. In appealing for the USG publicly to praise the AK government's responsible approach as a way to cut the legs from under the anti-government/anti-U.S. campaign, Disli added that P.M. Erdogan plans to underscore again the need for close relations with the U.S. on national TV the evening of July 10.

Action Request

10. (C) Septel describes today's mil/mil commission meetings and the first step towards drafting a joint commission statement. We need to make sure that the outcome supports those -- the P.M. and F.M. first among them -- who have tried to moderate the reaction and keep open the possibility of solid bilateral relations in the face of a severe and continuing pressure campaign.
PEARSON